AMERICAN PIONEER PROSE WRITERS

By HAMILTON W. MABIE
Author and Critic

FRANKLIN IN 1784

MODELED BY GIUSEPPE CENACHI

THE MENTOR

SERIAL NO. 106 · DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE

MENTOR GRAVURES

JONATHAN EDWARDS
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN
WASHINGTON IRVING
JAMES KIRKE PAULDING
JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

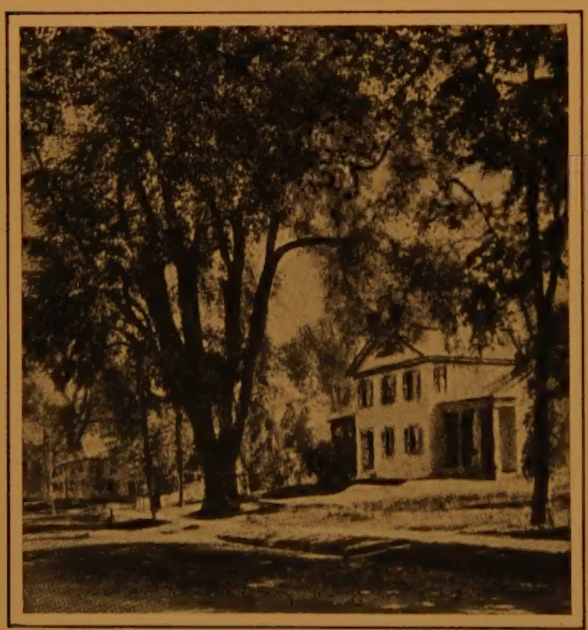
THE literatures of the great nations have begun with the childhood of those nations; that is to say, with fairy tales and legends and songs of heroism; with Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey," the Song of Beowulf (bay′-o-wulf), to name a few among many of the great beginnings of writing. In this country the pioneer writers shared the conditions of the pioneer builders of homes and communities. They were not, however, a people in their intellectual infancy. The country was new; but the people were old. They had all left literature of a high order behind them. Many of them must have been familiar with poetry and prose in English, French, and German, to say nothing of the classic literature which the scholars knew; and there were many scholars, north and south, among the early settlers.

The exploration and settlement of the country was a great adventure, which involved not only peril, but very hard work. In every colony people had to begin at the beginning,—to get roofs over their heads to

protect them from the climate, to raise the things they were to eat, to protect themselves from the Indians,—to do a thousand things of which people of our day are unconscious because they were done so long ago. The distances between the colonies were great, the means of communication were slow and infrequent, and the colonists knew very little of one another. They were isolated communities, not in any sense a nation. And so the early writing was the expression of the experiences and convictions of small communities. There cannot be a national literature until there is a national consciousness; and in the early days in America there was not even a sectional consciousness. There was only local consciousness.

The first book written on the continent was by that flamboyant, but very versatile Virginia colonist, Captain John Smith; a brave soldier, with a very warm and highly inventive imagination, whose habit of boasting has robbed him of a great deal of credit which really belonged to him. He wrote an account of adventures in Virginia, which may be taken as the beginning of American writing, and still has value. There was a long interval during which the writing of the colonists was devoted to theological discussion, or to accounts of the new world in which they were living.

JONATHAN EDWARDS' MEETING HOUSE
Built 1737—Torn down 1812



THE JONATHAN EDWARDS ELM, Northampton, Mass.
Set by Jonathan Edwards in 1730—The house of Josiah D. Whitney stands on the right of Edwards' house

A large part of the early writings of New England was more or less theological; but none of this writing rose to the rank of literature until Jonathan Edwards appeared in the first half of the eighteenth century.

HOUSE IN BOSTON IN WHICH FRANKLIN WAS BORN, 1706

JONATHAN EDWARDS

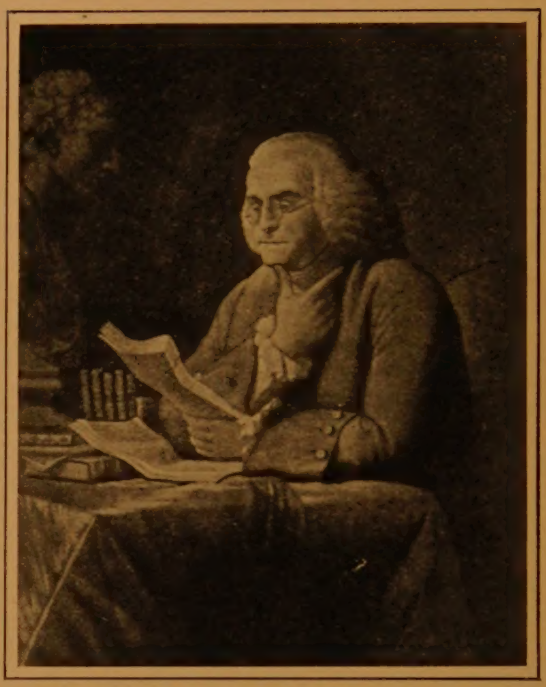
The son of a minister who was a lover of learning as well as of religion, like a great many other ministers of his time in New England, who prepared young men for college, and gave his daughters the same kind of instruction in the same subjects, Edwards was also the grandson of a minister on his mother's side; and his ancestry, like his descendants, was notable for intellectual vigor. He graduated from Yale College at the age of thirteen,—not an uncommon happening in that day of few entrance requirements,—and the qualities of his mind and the direction of his taste are indicated by the fact that he was already making notes on the mind and on natural philosophy. He studied for the ministry, and when he was twenty-four years old settled at Northampton, Massachusetts, where he was fortunate enough to marry a woman as remarkable as himself, of whom he wrote a description which has become a classic in the literature of love. Edwards was pursued by a haunting sense of sinfulness, and the depravity of the world often weighed heavily upon him. Mrs. Edwards happily combined a piety equal to that of her husband with great cheerfulness of disposition.

MEDALLION OF FRANKLIN, Age 72
By Jean Baptiste Nini

FRANKLIN'S GRAVE
Fifth and Arch Sts., Philadelphia

EDWARDS AS AN AUTHOR

A man of his intensity was certain to come into collision with some of the ideas held by his contemporaries and with much of their practice; and Edwards finally antagonized his congregation to such a degree that at the age of fifty-six he preached his farewell sermon. Several avenues of work were open to him, for he had become a man of wide reputation; but he settled at Stockbridge, Massa-



FRANKLIN, from a painting by D. Martin

chusetts, and wrote in the quiet of what was then a wilderness his famous treatise on "The Freedom of the Will," which is probably the most important American contribution to philosophy. It is his sermons, however, rather than his treatises, which entitle his work to a place in the history of American literature. Between eleven and twelve hundred of these sermons are preserved in Yale University Library. They are characterized by great vigor of thought, intensity of feeling, and often impressive power of statement. One of them, more famous, though in some respects not so true a piece of literature as others, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," created great commotion in its time, and the glow of the fire which possessed the preacher has not yet wholly faded from its pages.

LITERATURE OF THE REVOLUTION

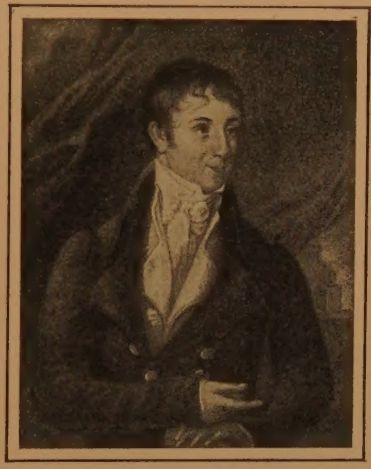
As the War of the Revolution approached the colonists began to have hopes and fears in common, and the war was preceded by a war of words. The grievances of the colonists were stated many times, sometimes with great force of reasoning and clearness; and a literature of discussion and debate, which reached the public largely through pamphlets, came into existence. Samuel Adams of Massachusetts wrote a stirring defense of the rights of the colonists. James Adams, James Otis, and Thomas Jefferson came to the front in this discussion; and their writing took on the dignity of literature.

FRANKLIN

THOMAS PAINE

One of the most vigorous contributors to this discussion was Thomas Paine, an Englishman by birth, whose ability as a writer attracted the attention of Benjamin Franklin, then in London, at whose suggestion Paine came to America. He had already made himself somewhat noted as a radical

critic of the English government and political system, and within a year of his arrival in this country became editor of the Pennsylvania Magazine. His "Common Sense," a pamphlet published in 1776, was a very vigorous argument in favor of severing all ties with the mother country. The argument was put so strongly, and at the same time with such simplicity, that it made a great impression on all kinds of people, and the Pennsylvania legislature, in recognition of the services he had rendered to the American cause, made him a gift of five hundred pounds. This pamphlet was immediately translated into various European languages. His "Crisis," which was published from time to time during the war, was also of great importance to the Americans, and the first number was read by order of Washington to every regiment in the colonial army. This was in the terrible winter of 1776, and the spirit and courage expressed in these papers did much to relieve the despondency of the time. The "Age of Reason," an attack on the Bible, published in 1794, shocked the world, and so beclouded Paine's reputation that his great service to the country has been largely overlooked.



CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN
By Wm. Dunlap—1806

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

If one wanted to name three men who are in a supreme degree representative of three leading American types, he would not go far astray if he named Franklin, Emerson, and Lincoln. Several years before the Revolution Hume described Franklin as "The First and indeed the first great Man of Letters in America"; and Dr. Johnson, in that most delightful exploitation of ignorance and eloquence, "Taxation No Tyranny," described him as "a master of mischief." Franklin was then one of the foremost representatives of the colonists, and one of the most ardent advocates of their claims. For thirty years Europe knew more about him than any other man in America, not excepting Washington. He was a Bostonian by birth, the son of a tallow chandler. He had a casual contact with the Boston Latin School; but his formal education was finished in his eleventh year, when he began to work as a general utility boy in his father's shop. He was fond of reading, and was fortunate enough to possess Bunyan's works, and a little later he was reading Robinson Crusoe and other works by Defoe, who undoubtedly had great influence on his style. His love of books inclined him to the printer's trade, and his self-education went on rapidly. Another piece of good fortune was finding a volume of the Spectator. He has given a very interesting account of his use of this classic of sound, clear English prose,

and has described its influence on his language and style. Then he read Xenophon's "Memorabilia," which gave him a clear idea of the Socratic method of discussion. At the age of fifteen he was already writing for the colonial press, contributing essays notable for their very sensible moralizing and their practical wisdom; for Franklin was, and still is, the representative of American practical sagacity and commonsense.

POOR RICHARD'S ALMANAC

Fame and fortune came to him with the publication of Poor Richard's Almanac, which began in 1732 and was continued for a quarter of a century. These almanacs went into almost every house in America, and served not only as calendars, lists of events, warnings about the weather, with doggerel verses, but furnished proverbs of a very practical character, and also margins on which all sorts of notes could be written. "Keep thy shop and thy shop will keep thee," is a good example of "Poor Richard's" practical wisdom. His personal experience at home and abroad made Franklin in many ways the most conspicuous American of his time. His industry is shown by the fact that his work fills a hundred and seven volumes. In this mass of writing, of greatest importance is his Autobiography, which told the story of his life from his childhood to his arrival in London in 1757. It is a straight, clear, unpretentious piece of writing, and, all things considered, must be considered one of the most important original contributions to American literature.

WASHINGTON IRVING
From the painting by Gilbert Stuart Newton

MATILDA HOFFMAN
By Malbone

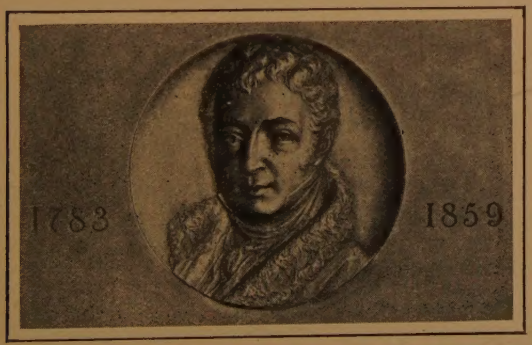
JOHN WOOLMAN

If John Woolman's work had borne any resemblance to that of Jonathan Edwards, Charles Lamb would never have said of it, "Learn Woolman's work by heart." It was as far as possible removed from the Dantesque vigor of the Puritan preacher. Woolman was a Quaker, born in New Jersey, with very few educational opportunities, but of a naturally religious nature, and seemed early, though in a perfectly normal way, to have thought of the world as the creation of a great and benignant God.

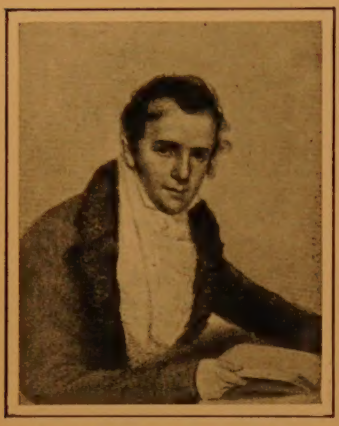
SUNNYSIDE, IRVING'S HOME NEAR TARRYTOWN, N. Y.

BUST OF IRVING IN BRYANT PARK, NEW YORK CITY

Like many other naturally serious youths of his time, as of Bunyan's time, he was sorely beset by a consciousness of sinfulness, which he expressed in terms that today seem morbid in their intensity. He accused himself of offenses of which it is quite certain that he was innocent; but he began very early to understand the gospel of love and to desire above everything else to live in complete harmony with the will of God. He was not satisfied, however, to do this by simply obeying the law of righteousness or acquiescing in a will which he could not oppose. He was eager to make his obedience positive and active; so he became one of the earliest antislavery men in the country, and one of the most ardent. His genius saved him from fanaticism; while his simple earnestness and his effective appeal to the higher ideals of his auditors made him a persuasive speaker. He hated slavery; but he never attacked the slaveholder. His nature was one of singular purity and harmony; and as he had no self-consciousness and no ambition, and writing was simply a means of expression, his nature got into his style. Although an illiterate Quaker, an English critic declared that "He writes in a style of the most exquisite purity and grace." His Journal, which is considered one of the classics of early American literature, is an unaffected and intimate record of his thoughts, feelings, and experi-



TABLET BY V. D. BRENNER, ON WASHINGTON IRVING HIGH SCHOOL, NEW YORK CITY



JAMES K. PAULDING, by Jarvis

ences. It was begun in his thirty-seventh year, It is not in any sense great literature; but it is real literature, and as contrasted with all the colonial writing, save that of Edwards and Franklin, it stands out by reason of the purity of its style and the beauty of its feeling and thought.

The note of mystery was struck early in American writing, "Peter Rugg," by William Austin, appearing in the New England Galaxy in 1824-1826.

CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN

Charles Brockden Brown's stories were published still earlier; and he is often spoken of as the predecessor of Hawthorne. Like Francis Hopkinson, he was a Philadelphian, who studied law and made literature his profession. His first novel, "Wieland, or The Transformation," was a story of ventriloquism, very artificial, but skilful and interesting. This was followed by a much more striking tale, "Edgar Huntley," a tale of terror, which seemed to predict Poe, and this in turn by three or four other novels. Brown was an industrious man, and his activity extended into other fields. He published a number of pamphlets and semiscientific treatises. His work had little permanent value. It was sentimental and unreal, and lacked art; but its morbid psychology and a certain kind of intensity gave it popularity at the time.

WASHINGTON IRVING

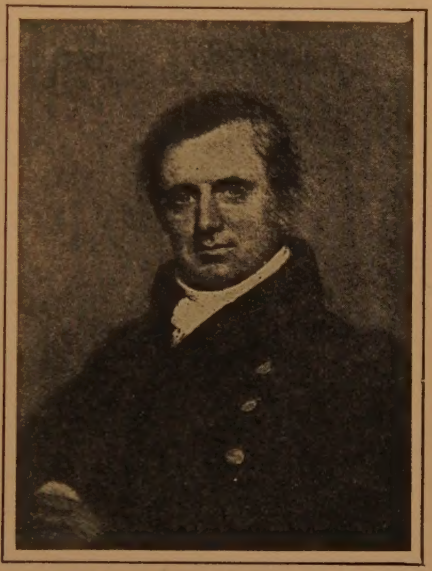
American literature in the strictest sense of the word really began in the city of New York with the publication of Washington Irving's Knickerbocker History of New York. New York was then the most cosmopolitan of all cities of the New World, as it was the largest. It was a pleasant town of twenty-five thousand people, and it had picturesque traditions; for it was first settled by the Dutch, who had, in a way, taken possession of the Hudson River. They were followed in turn by the English, and still later there was a large influx of French Huguenots. When the Revolution broke out eighteen languages were already spoken in the city of New York. It was natural,

PAULDING'S HOME AT PLEASANT VALLEY, N. Y.

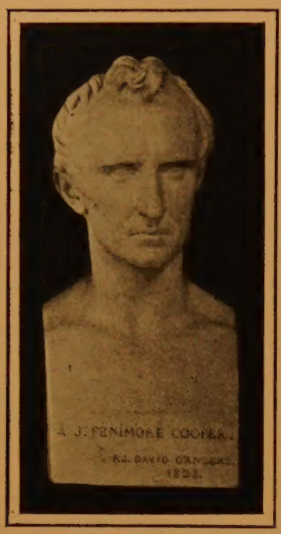
therefore, that the literature of imagination, of humor, and of sentiment should find a soil in the cosmopolitan society of the town; and Irving, who was born in the year in which the British troops embarked for England, who declined to go to college, as his brothers had gone, but read law and, probably with greater avidity, books of general literature, and was a lover of nature, had both the temperament and the taste to write gentle satire. He was a born observer and loiterer, a man who saw and felt and meditated. He had the high spirit of youth, and when he returned in 1806 from Europe he was still a young man, and there were some other gifted young men in New York to keep him company. They published anonymously a series of semi-humorous, satirical comments on men, women, and things social, dramatic, and literary, under the title "Salmagundi," and in these papers Irving's humor, sentiment, and delightful style were conspicuous. They were followed by the Knickerbocker History of New York, in which the audacious young man broadly burlesqued the ancestors of some of the foremost people in New York. It was good-natured; but it gave great offense. It was, however, the first book of quality and feeling written by an American. In 1815 Irving went to Europe a second time, and did not

BIRTHPLACE OF COOPER, Burlington, N. J.
The center house is the home of Capt. James Lawrence

OTSEGO HALL, COOPERSTOWN, N. Y.
Cooper's boyhood home



COOPER IN 1822, painted by J. W. Jarvis



BUST OF COOPER
David d'Angers—1828

return until 1832. During that interval he published two books, which made a reputation for him on both sides of the Atlantic, "Bracebridge Hall" and "The Sketch-Book." These books made the colonists, irritated by their long discussion with England, more tolerant of the mother country, because they recalled places and customs that had been dear to their ancestors, or to their own youth. Thackeray called Irving "the first ambassador whom the new world of letters sent to the old."

JAMES K. PAULDING

One of the most prominent members of the little company of young men subsequently known as the Knickerbocker writers, who were all friends of Irving, was James K. Paulding, whose youth fell in the period of the Revolutionary War. In consequence he received very little education, but had great vigor of mind and energy of character. He early became acquainted with Washington Irving, and a strong friendship grew up between them. Paulding was one of the contributors to the Salmagundi papers, and began early to write for various periodicals. His diverting history of "John Bull and Brother Jonathan" passed through many editions, and his satirical tendency made him popular at a time when the feeling in this country against Great Britain was very strong. A pamphlet entitled "The United States and England," which appeared in 1814, secured political preferment for Paulding, and he was made secretary to the first board of navy commissioners. A story published in 1831, "The Dutchman's Fireside," founded on an earlier description of the manners of the early Dutch settlers, was his most successful production, passing through six editions in a year, and being republished abroad and translated into several languages. Paulding's talent, although genuine, was not distinctive enough to secure his permanent reputation; but he remains a very interesting figure in a group of delightful writers, and his early skits, if they may be so called, were very keen satirical comments on some offensive British traits and qualities.

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

Cooper, who was also a New Yorker, published "The Spy" in 1821. "Precaution," his first effort in fiction, which had already appeared, was a study of English society life, about which Cooper knew very little, and it was a failure. In "The Spy," Cooper knew his ground and his people. He had spent much of his boyhood at Cooperstown, in central New York,

near the scene of much of the Indian fighting. He had heard stories of adventure from Indian fighters and trappers. Many of the men who had fought in the American ranks during the War of the Revolution were still living. "The Spy" was instantly popular, because it was the first really American novel written by an American. It dealt with a very interesting character, Harvey Birch; and it appealed alike to the men who knew of the war from experience, and to those who had been brought up to revere the veterans of the Revolution. Europe, too, was intensely curious about the Indian, and the stories that followed, especially those in the Leather Stocking Tales, were translated into almost every European tongue, and are still read in all parts of the Old World. Boys in remote German villages are still playing Cooper's Indians.

Cooper was a very uneven writer, careless, and indifferent about artistic effects. He was often diffuse and often commonplace, and he had not much skill in drawing portraits of men and women; but he could tell a story rapidly and dramatically. He knew how to keep his readers in suspense, and he knew nature, both on land and at sea.

LEATHER STOCKING MONUMENT AT COOPERSTOWN

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN LITERATURE
By Henry S. Pancoast

BRIEF HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE
By W. P. Trent
An excellent treatment of the subject in brief.

A STUDY OF PROSE FICTION
By Bliss Perry
A scholarly work by a distinguished critical writer.

ASPECTS OF FICTION
By Brander Matthews
An informing and also a charming literary study by a recognized authority.

LITERARY HISTORY OF AMERICA
By Prof. Barrett Wendell

HISTORY OF LITERATURE IN AMERICA
By Prof. Barrett Wendell and C. N. Greenough
A condensed survey of the subject.

MATERIALS AND METHODS OF FICTION
By Clayton Hamilton
A simple, interesting, practical book.

AMERICAN LANDS AND LETTERS
By Donald G. Mitchell (Ik Marvel)
A most attractive work, valuable in its informing qualities, and written in most delightful style by the author of "Reveries of a Bachelor."

Why The Mentor? What's in the name? We might have chosen any one of fifty names beside The Mentor. We had a list of fully 100 names before we made our selection. And the material that we have supplied under the name of "Mentor" would have served its purpose as well under another name. But we chose our name very carefully. There's a reason for "Mentor." And yet, although we are now a little over three years old and number nearly 100,000 in membership, no one has asked the reason—at least until a few weeks ago. Then one of our earliest members put the question, "What or who is The Mentor?" The question was slow in coming, but I am glad it is here, because the answer is worth while.

★ ★ ★

Mentor was a very worthy individual of ancient Greece. You can read about him in Homer's "Odyssey." He was the son of Alcimus and the faithful friend of Ulysses (Odysseus). When Ulysses set forth on his long wanderings, he consigned his household and his family, including his son Telemachus to the care of his friend Mentor. So faithful was Mentor in his attention to Telemachus and so serviceable to him in precept and example that his name has now come to be used in the sense of a wise and trustworthy advisor—"a wise and faithful guide and friend" as a modern dictionary phrases it.

★ ★ ★

The name of Mentor was brought down nearer to our time by the eminent French writer, philosopher, and churchman, Fenelon, archbishop of Cambria. He lived in the time of the Grand Monarch, Louis XIV, and so wise and cultivated was he that the king made him tutor to his grandson, the Duke of Burgundy, eldest son of the dauphin, and eventual heir to the throne. In the course of his tutorship, and for purposes of instruction, Fenelon wrote several remarkable books—prose poems, in their way, but each having a distinct moral purpose either religious or political. In one of these, published in 1699, and entitled "Telemaque," Fenelon recounts the adventures of the son of Ulysses in search of his father. It is a Utopian novel dealing with conditions of life in an idealistic way, and hovering between dreams and realities. Its object was to educate the young Duke of Burgundy's mind to the highest purposes of life as they should be regarded by royalty—to keep before his eyes the "great and holy maxim that kings exist for the sake of their subjects, not subjects for the sake of kings." In this book the character of "Mentor" figures prominently. His aims are educational in a gentle, lofty way, his hope being, as he puts it himself, "to change the tastes and habits of the people."

★ ★ ★

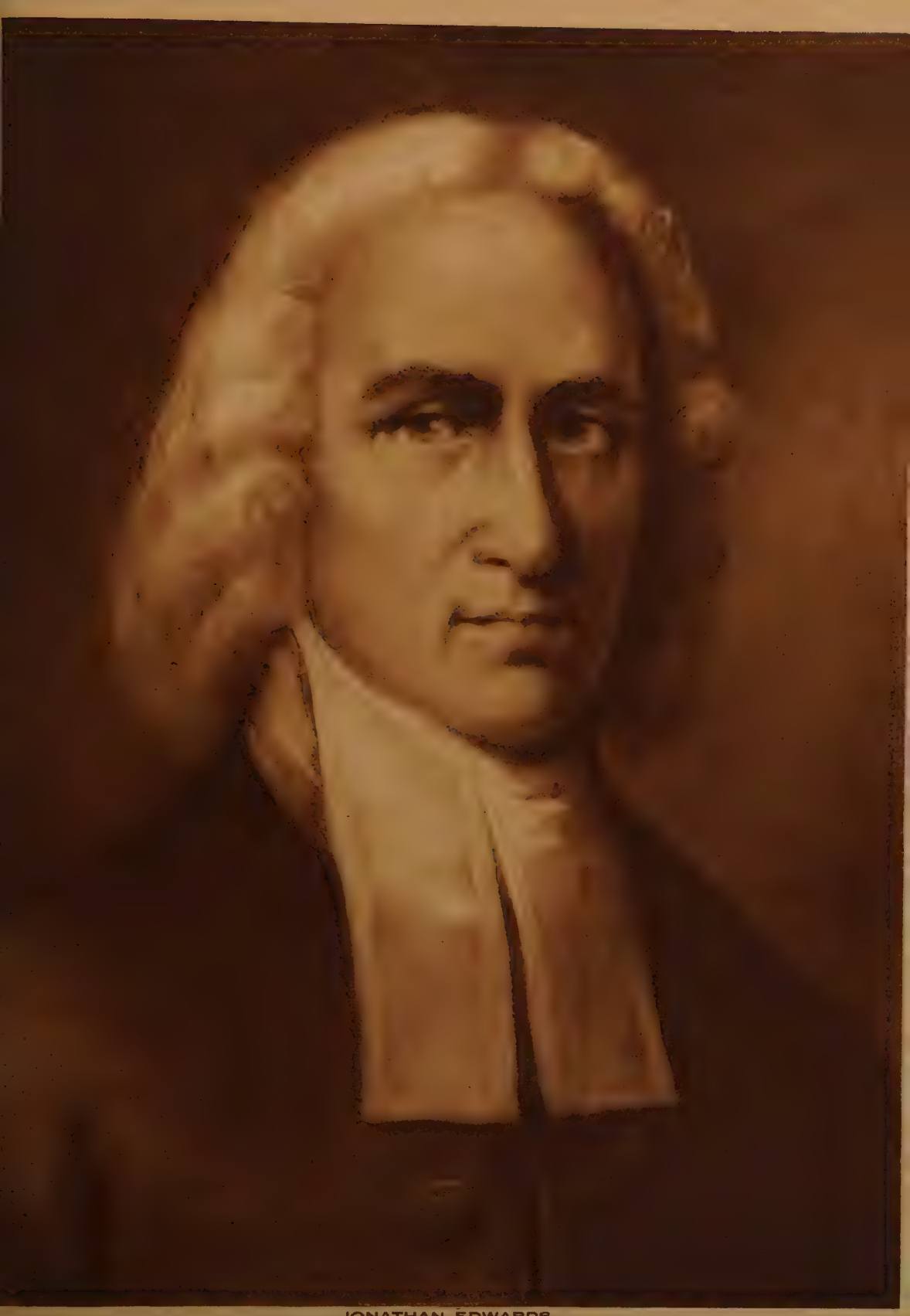
It was more due to Fenelon's employment of the character of "Mentor" than to that of Homer, that the name "Mentor" came into use as a modern word. "Mentor" now stands for a wise instructor and a guide, but, first and foremost, a friend. The underlying principle of "Mentor" is an interest in the welfare and improvement of others, and the dominating purpose of his life is *service* to others.

★ ★ ★

So for that reason we selected the name. And when we made the selection we thought that we were the first to use the name in the field of periodical publication. We lived in that illusion but a short time. Scarcely six months had gone by before we learned anew the old lesson that the world is small and that there are many active minds in it. One morning a plain, unpretentious periodical came into our office bearing on its front the title "The Mentor," and with it came a friendly letter of greeting from its editor. The place of publication was the Charlestown Jail, and the object of the periodical was to reflect in prose and verse the daily life of the occupants of that quiet and secure retreat. The editor extended his greetings to me and asked me if I would exchange with him—not positions, but periodicals. The request was readily granted, and, as a result, we are now thoroughly informed of the affairs of that substantial institution of Charlestown, and we are carrying our message of information twice a month to the members of the exclusive community located there.

W. D. Moffat

EDITOR



JONATHAN EDWARDS

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Monograph Number One in The Mentor Reading Course

ONATHAN EDWARDS was one of the most impressive figures of his time. He was a deep thinker, a strong writer, a powerful theologian, and a constructive philosopher. He was born on October 5, 1703, at East (now South) Windsor, Connecticut. His father, Timothy Edwards, was a minister of East Windsor, and also a tutor. Jonathan, the only son, was the fifth of eleven children.

Even as a boy he was thoughtful and serious minded. It is recorded that he never played the games, or got mixed up in the mischief that the usual boy indulges in. When he was only ten years old he wrote a tract on the soul. Two years later he wrote a really remarkable essay on the "Flying Spider." He entered Yale and graduated at the head of his class as valedictorian. The next two years he spent in New Haven studying theology. In February, 1727, he was ordained minister at Northampton, Massachusetts. In the same year he married Sarah Pierrepont, who was an admirable wife and became the mother of his twelve children.

In 1733 a great revival in religion began in Northampton. So intense did this become in that winter that the business of the town was threatened. In six months nearly 300 were admitted to the church. Of course Edwards was a leading spirit in this revival. The orthodox leaders of the church had no sympathy with it. At last a crisis came in Edwards' relations with his congregation, which finally ended in his being driven from the church.

Edwards and his family were now thrown upon the world with nothing to live on. After some time he became pastor of an Indian mission at Stockbridge, Massachusetts. He preached to the Indians through an interpreter, and in every way possible defended their interests against the whites, who were trying to enrich themselves at the expense of the red men.

President Burr of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) died in 1757. Five years before he had married one of Edwards' daughters. Jonathan Edwards was elected to his place, and installed in February, 1758. There was smallpox in Princeton at this time, and the new president was inoculated for it. His feeble constitution could not bear the shock, and he died on March 22. He was buried in the old cemetery at Princeton.

Edwards in personal appearance was slender and about six feet tall, with an oval, gentle, almost feminine face which made him look the scholar and the mystic. But he had a violent temper when aroused, and was a strict parent. He did not allow his boys out of doors after nine o'clock at night, and if any suitor of his daughter remained beyond that hour he was quietly but forcibly informed that it was time to lock up the house.

Jonathan Edwards would not be called an eloquent speaker today; but his sermons were forceful, and charged with his personality. These sermons were written in very small handwriting, with the lines close together. It was Edwards' invariable habit to read them. He leaned with his left elbow on the cushion of the pulpit, and brought the finely written manuscript close to his eyes. He used no gestures; but shifted from foot to foot while reading.

PREPARED BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF OF THE MENTOR ASSOCIATION
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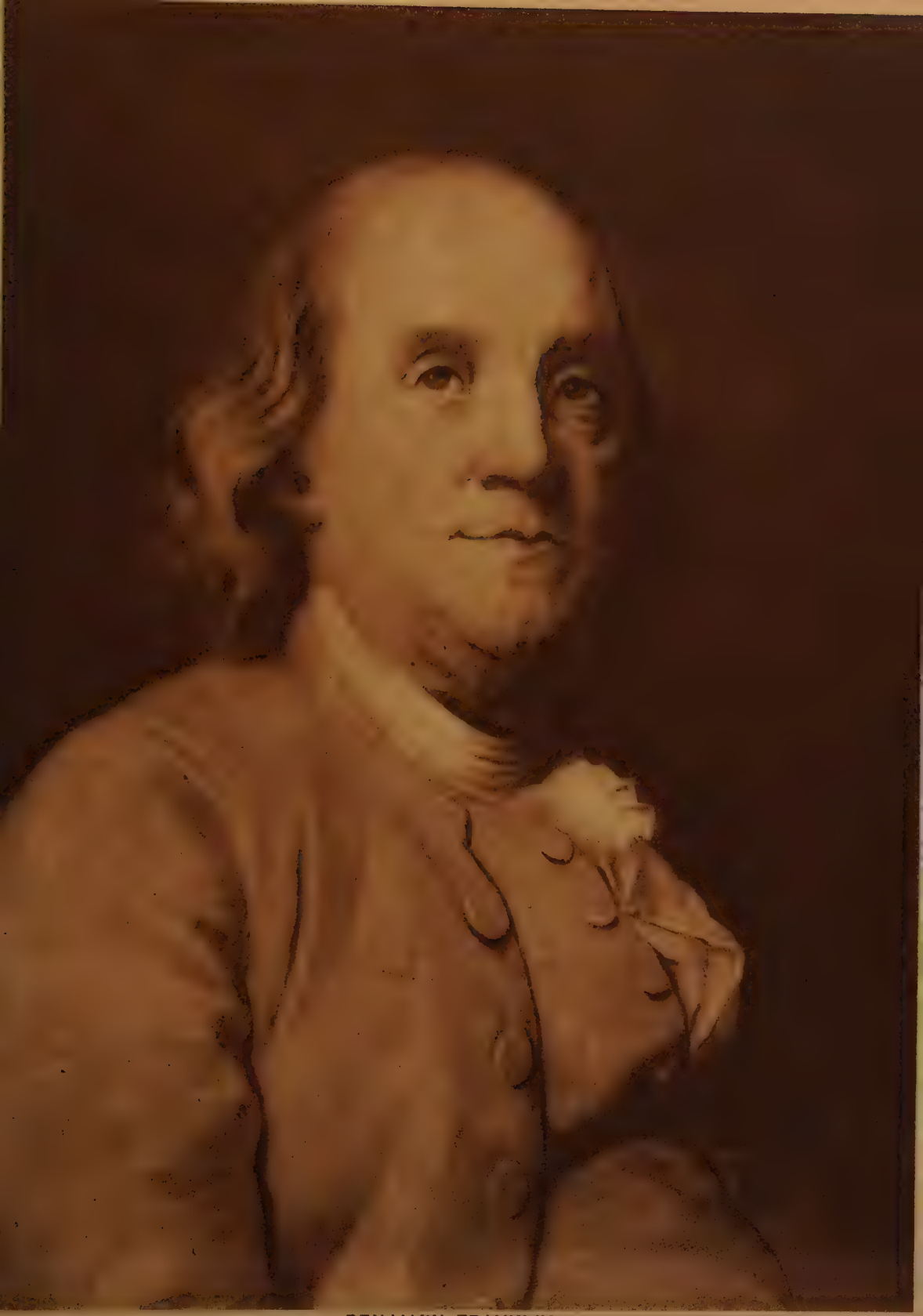

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Monograph Number Two in The Mentor Reading Course

PROBABLY no American of humble origin ever attained to more enduring fame than many-sided Benjamin Franklin. The secret of his rise can be tersely told. He had ceaseless energy, guided by a passion for the improvement of mankind. A recital of his accomplishments sounds like a round of the old counting game, "doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief." He was, in fact, all the list except the "thief."

Boston gave him to America on January 17, 1706, but Philadelphia claimed him early, and he stamped himself upon the Quaker City almost as definitely as did William Penn.

Passing over his precocious boyhood, when he wrote for the Boston publication of his brother James with a skill that at the time was held astonishing, the day he reached Philadelphia he was a great, overgrown boy, his clothes most unsightly; for he had been wrecked trying to make an economical trip from New York by sailboat. With the exception of a single Dutch dollar he was penniless. As he trudged about the streets, his big eyes drinking in the sights, his cupid-bow mouth ready to smile at the slightest provocation, he munched a roll of bread. His reserve food supply was a loaf under each arm.

He was an expert printer, and printers were wanted in Philadelphia. He soon got a job, after which he found a boarding place in the home of one Read, with whose daughter, Deborah, he promptly fell in love.

After a few years the governor of Pennsylvania urged him to go to London to purchase a printing plant of his own. The official had promised to send letters and funds aboard the ship in the mail-bag; but at the critical moment forgot all about it. So young Franklin landed in London without a cent, and played a short engagement as "beggar man."

Again his skill as a printer saved him from want, and he remained five years, having a most interesting time, meeting many of the great men of England, all of whom were charmed with his wit and philosophy.

In all that period he did not write a single letter to Deborah Read; yet he seemed surprised and hurt on his return to Philadelphia to find the young woman married to another. But Deborah's husband, who had treated her cruelly, quite civilly left her a widow, so that Franklin, careless but faithful, was able ultimately to claim her as his wife.

For the next twenty years Franklin did something new at almost every turn. He flew a kite in a thunder shower, drew down electricity, and invented the lightning rod, to the salvation of generations of rural sales agents. He invented a stove that still holds his name. He organized the first fire company in America, and founded the first public library. All the while he was publishing "Poor Richard's Almanac," which to this day ranks as an epigrammatic masterpiece.

American politics soon claimed Franklin as an ideal diplomatist. English and Scottish universities honored him with degrees for his discoveries and writings. In Paris he became the most popular man of the period, and was overwhelmed with attention from all classes.

He was one of the first signers of the Declaration of Independence; and he rounded out his political career as governor of Pennsylvania and one of the framers of the Constitution. He died in Philadelphia in April, 1790, in some respects the greatest of Americans.

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CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN

American Pioneer Prose Writers

CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN

Monograph Number Three in The Mentor Reading Course

CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN has often been called the earliest American novelist; but today his books are very rarely read. All of them are romantic and weird, with incidents bordering on the supernatural. They are typical of the kind of novel general at the time Brown lived.

He was born on January 17, 1771, in Philadelphia. His parents were Quakers. As a boy his health was bad, and since he was not able to join with other boys in outdoor sports he spent most of his time in study. His principal amusement was the invention of ideal architectural designs, planned on the most extensive and elaborate scale. Later this bent for construction developed into schemes for ideal commonwealths. Still later it showed itself in the elaborate plots of his novels.

Brown planned in the early part of his life to study law; but his constitution was too feeble for this arduous work. He had his share of the youthful dreams of great literary conquests. He planned a great epic on the discovery of America, with Columbus as his hero; another with the adventures of Pizarro for the subject; and still another upon the conquests of Cortes. However, as with the case of many great dreams, they were given up.

When he was still a boy he wrote a romance called "Carsol," which was not published, however, until after his death. The next thing he wrote was an essay on the question of women's rights and liberties. This question was already becoming an important one in England, where William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft were publishing their writings. Brown was much influenced by the works of both.

Although Brown's books make heavy reading, yet his companionships were of the liveliest. It was said that no man ever had truer friends or loved these friends better. One of his closest friends was Dr. Eli Smith, a literary man. It was through him that Brown was introduced into the Friendly Club of New York City, where he met many other workers in the literary field. And it was under their influence that he produced his first important work.

This was a novel published in 1798, called "Wieland, or the Transformation." A mystery, seemingly inexplicable, is solved as a case of ventriloquism, which at that time was just beginning to be understood thoroughly. His next book was "Arthur Mervyn," remarkable for its description of the epidemic of yellow fever in Philadelphia. "Edgar Huntley," a romance rich in local color, followed this. An effective use is made of somnambulism, and in it Brown anticipates James Fenimore Cooper's introduction of the American Indian into fiction.

The novelist then wrote two novels dealing with ordinary life; but they proved to be failures. Then he began to compile a general system of geography, to edit a periodical, and to write political pamphlets; but all the time his health was failing. On February 22, 1810, he died of tuberculosis.

His biographer, William Dunlap, who was the novelist's friend, says that Brown was the purest and most amiable of men, due perhaps to his Quaker education. His manner was at times a little stiff and formal; but in spite of this he was deeply loved by his friends.

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WASHINGTON IRVING

American Pioneer Prose Writers

WASHINGTON IRVING

Monograph Number Four in The Mentor Reading Course

BANKRUPTCY produced one of the greatest American writers. If the business house with which Washington Irving was associated had not failed, he might never have seriously attempted to take up literature.

Washington Irving was born in New York City on April 3, 1783. He was named after George Washington, who at that time was the idol of the American people. Both his parents were immigrants from Great Britain. His father was a prosperous merchant at the time of Irving's birth.

Irving was a mischievous boy. Perhaps this was due to the fact that Deacon Irving was a severe father. He detested the theater, and permitted no reading on Sunday except the Bible and the Catechism. Washington was permitted on weekdays to read only Gulliver's Travels and Robinson Crusoe. Nevertheless, in spite of his father's strictness, the boy managed to steal away from home to attend the theater.

Irving intended to be a lawyer; but his health gave way, and he had to take a voyage to Europe. In this journey he went as far as Rome, and in England made the acquaintance of Washington Allston, the famous American painter, who was then living there. On his return he was admitted to the bar; but he made little effort at practising.

In the meanwhile, however, he, his brother William, and J. K. Paulding wrote some humorous sketches called "Salmagundi Papers," which were quite successful.

About this time came the single romance of Irving's life. Judge Hoffman, in whose law office he was, had a daughter named Matilda. The young lawyer fell in love with her; but this romance was brought to a tragic end by her death. Irving never married, remaining true throughout life to the memory of this early attachment.

Irving's first important piece of writing was the Knickerbocker History of New York. It was a clever parody of a history of the city published by Dr. Samuel Mitchell. The book was received with enthusiasm by the public, and Irving's reputation was made.

His health, never of the best, again gave way. In 1815 he revisited Europe, and made the acquaintance of many important people there, including Disraeli, Campbell, and Scott. The business in which he was a silent partner fell into bad conditions and ended with a bankruptcy which left Irving virtually without resources. His brother, who was an influential member of Congress, secured for him a secretaryship in the United States Navy Department with a salary of $2,500 a year; but Irving declined this, with the intention of writing for a living.

From that time he was successful. All his books were eagerly received, and it was not long before he was considered America's leading writer. He went to Spain as attaché of the American legation in 1826. When he returned to the United States he found his name a household word. Then he decided to settle down somewhere in the country and quietly enjoy life. He built a delightful home on the Hudson River, New York, to which he gave the name of "Sunnyside," where he spent his last years. His charming personality attracted to him many friends, and there were no worries to bother him. He continued his writing to the very last. He died of heart disease at Sunnyside on November 28, 1859. On the day of his funeral all the shops in Tarrytown were closed and draped in mourning. Both sides of the road leading to his grave at Sleepy Hollow were crowded with sorrowful mourners.

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JAMES KIRKE PAULDING

American Pioneer Prose Writers

JAMES KIRKE PAULDING

Monograph Number Five in The Mentor Reading Course

"Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers;
Where is the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?"

IT is rather unusual to find that the most familiar writing of an author is merely a bit of nonsense. Yet the verse of James Kirke Paulding best known to us today is the tongue-twister quoted above. He wrote poetry, most of which is gracefully commonplace, and a good many novels, attractive in style but of no great interest.

James Kirke Paulding was born in Dutchess County, New York, on August 22, 1779. He attended the village school for a short time; but in 1800 went to New York City, where, in connection with his brother-in-law, William Irving, and Washington Irving, another of the American pioneer prose writers, he began to publish in January, 1807, a series of short, lightly humorous articles called the "Salmagundi Papers." In 1814 a political pamphlet of his, "The United States and England," attracted the notice of President Madison. He was favorably impressed, and the next year appointed him secretary to the Board of Navy Commissioners. He held this position until November, 1823. He was navy agent in New York City from 1825 to 1837.

Paulding was always a successful man of affairs and an able politician. In recognition of his ability, President Van Buren made him a member of his cabinet in 1837 as Secretary of the Navy.

Later he retired to Poughkeepsie, New York, where he divided his time between writing and farming. He died on April 6, 1860.

Paulding came of good old Knickerbocker blood. In his work he never liked to revise what he had already written, nor did he plan out his books. His best known work is perhaps the "Dutchman's Fireside," which has many pleasing pages of Dutch life.

He also wrote a number of poems; but these do not measure up to the standards of good poetry. One of them, "The Backwoodsman," extends over three thousand lines, few of which may be termed good.

Paulding was one of the first distinctively American writers. From his father, an active Revolutionary patriot, he inherited strong anti-British sentiments. Throughout his life he was a vigorous protester against intellectual thraldom to the mother country.

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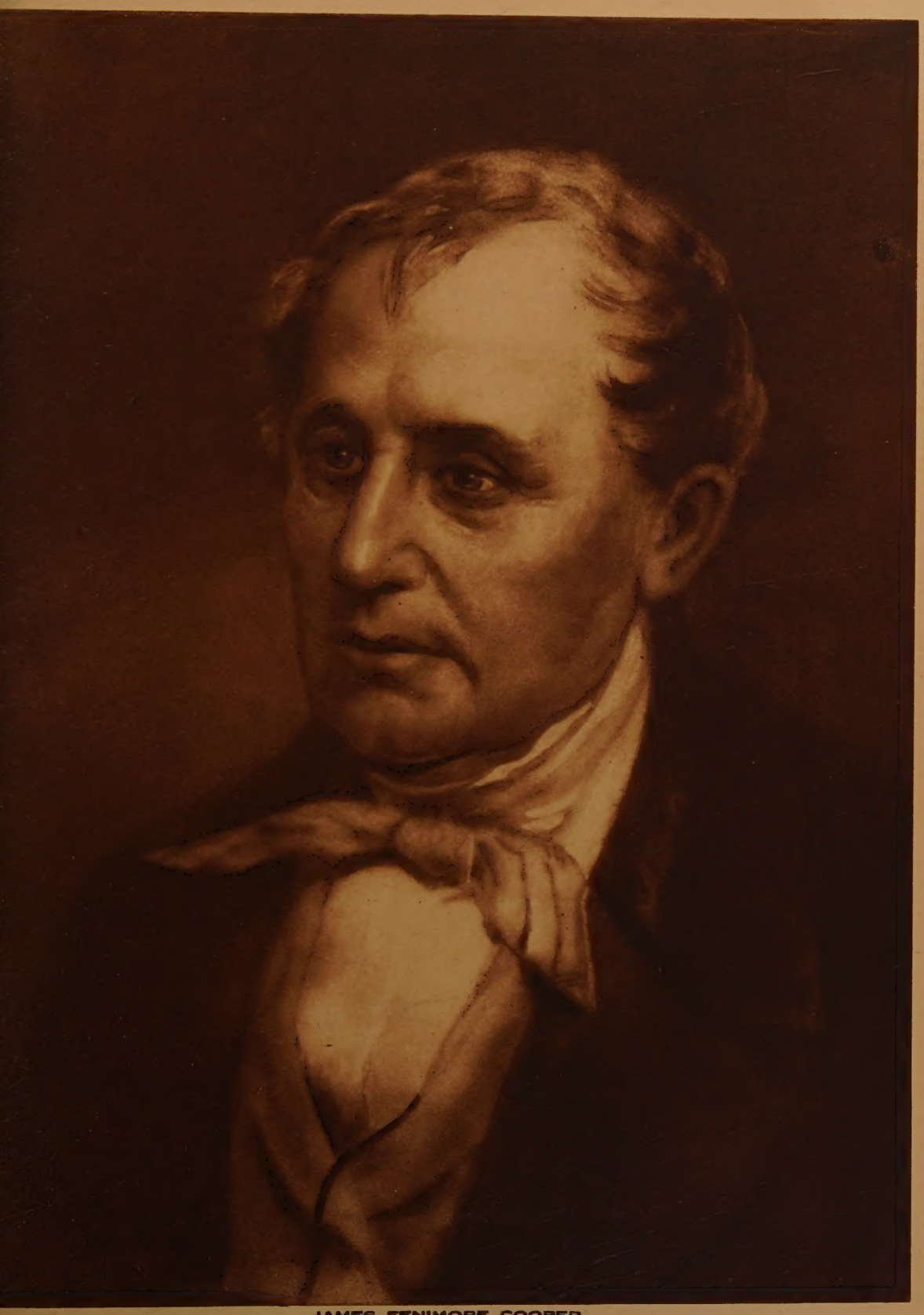

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

American Pioneer Prose Writers

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

Monograph Number Six in The Mentor Reading Course

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER was one of the most popular writers that ever lived. Almost every American has read some or all of Cooper's books, and his stories have been translated into nearly all the languages of Europe, and indeed into some of Asia. Balzac, the French novelist, admired him greatly. Victor Hugo, another famous French writer, said that Cooper was greater than any novelist living at that time. Many of Cooper's readers gave him the title of "The American Walter Scott."

Cooper was born at Burlington, New Jersey, September 15, 1789. His boyhood was spent in the wild country around Otsego Lake, New York. His father was a judge and a member of Congress. Cooper entered Yale at the early age of fourteen, and was the youngest student on the rolls.

At college he did not pay much attention to his studies, and in fact was rather wayward. Before he had even completed his junior year, his resignation was requested. His father interceded for him; but it was useless. The young man then entered the United States navy; but, after becoming a midshipman, he resigned to marry. He then settled down in Westchester County, New York. His home life proved to be most happy.

He published his first book, "Precaution," anonymously. Then came "The Spy," in 1821, a success from the very first. Many novels followed in rapid succession. In 1826 he went to Paris, where he published "The Prairie," which many consider the best of all his books. He became very popular abroad. The most distinguished people of Europe felt honored to entertain him.

In 1833 he returned to America, where he discovered that his popularity was declining, as American critics did not believe that his later books were measuring up to his earlier standard. He resented the sharp criticism of several of his writings, and much ill feeling grew up between the novelist and the public.

In particular he was on bad terms with his neighbors in the village of Cooperstown, New York, where he lived. This came to a climax in a fierce quarrel over the ownership of a bit of woodland which extended into the lake near his home, Otsego Hall. Cooper won in the courts;—but the villagers evened things up with him by personal attacks. Lawsuits followed one after another. Although Cooper pretended indifference to public opinion, nevertheless he suffered under the abusive attacks.

Cooper was not on intimate terms with the prominent literary men of his day. Toward the end of his life he loved his home more and more. He was fond of walking in the woods and fields, and, as he himself said, he had "an old man's yearning for the solemn shadows of the trees." On September 14, 1851, he died peacefully in his home at Cooperstown, surrounded by members of his family.

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